Fate of Last Island.

The terrible cyclone that destroyed Galveston island is not the first calamity of the kind that has occurred in the Mexican gulf. It vividly recalls an incident that will ever live in memory. Over forty years ago there was a similar calamity in the destruction of Last island, off the Louisiana coast, by a cyclone, September 12, 1856.

Last island was a long, low streak of green, bound around the edge with a line of intensely white sand. Seen in those days from the Louisiana mainland (fifteen miles away, the lower end of the parish of Lafourche), and part of the parish of St. Mary's (the garden of Louisiana), it seemed but a slender bit of green floating upon the bosom of the summer sea. As you drew nearer the land displayed its charms. The island proper was about seven miles wide by about twenty-five long. The soil was very rich and highly cultivated. Propinquity brought out as in a delicate photograph all its lines of radiant beauty. Of forest, so deep and dense in the far south there was none. But a few enormous live-oak trees had grown upon the island, and in the world of light of the semi-tropical moon, covered from crown to lowest bough with a long gray moss of the latitude, they seem like great giants wrapped in their funeral robes, waving their arms aloft as they fled from a coming dies irae. Beyond these there were no forest trees, as has been said. The island was but one long sand spit (only a few feet above the highest tide level of the sea), covered with ever-living green. But it was a very Eden of flowers. The fallen leaves of the live-oak for centuries had created in their decay a bed of rich alluvium, which artificial means had greatly increased. The ever-warm air from the further south seas had given to the shrub growth an extraordinary richness of verdure. The orange and lemon trees, the olive, the oleander (which in Louisiana is a tree thirty feet high) all of the tribe of japonicas, and the scented summer flower, jessamine yellow and cape, and hundreds of others unknown outside the tropics, made the island coruscant with brilliant colored blossoms. It seemed that all that was rich and lovely and beautiful in the vegetation of the semi-tropics here found its most congenial home.

Resort of Southern Fashion.

In the evening when the sun went down and the warm south wind drew in from the sea, the air would be heavy with sweet but unfamiliar flower odors. You would be enveloped in a very caress of perfume, direct from the heart of the great white Persian jessamine. Ah, the dreamy, happy life of that wonderful isle in the days of long ago! True it was a watering place, with a most splendid surf bathing on the side next the open sea. But it had none of the garishness of seacoast places of later days. It could never have been like Long Branch or Cape May. To gamblers and games of the half-world Last island was as difficult as paradise. It was impossible to pass the argus eyes of the doyen who watched the gangway of the boat as the passengers came on board for the enchanted isle, as for Adam to return to Eden when it was guarded by the angel with the flaming sword. The men who gathered there were not strangers to each other, for in Louisiana then everybody who was anybody knew of his social equal, if he was not a personal acquaintance, no matter in what region he lived. So there was a spot, not very much known to the outer world, where could gather, when summer days became long and the dog star raged, the great cotton planting magnates of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, or the rich, courtly Creole sugar growers from the Bayou Lafourche country, or the Cote d'Or, on the Mississippi river, and their congeners, the American sugar planters from the Felicianas and wealthy, aristocratic Rapides.

Once a year the very cream of the country-side gentry from the states named, with a sprinkling of wealthy "city men," merchants and factors from New Orleans, a few bankers, popular clergymen from the rich city parishes, with their wives and daughters, would congregate at Last island and eat of the divinest combinations of the French cuisine, produced by cordons bleus, drink—sparingly, generally—of the good red wines of France for your old-time planter, especially if he was of Creole blood, never abused "God's good things"—take daily plunges into the warm surf, and thus lucrously enjoy a month of *dolce far niente*. Never were men more courtly. Never were women lovelier. It was the very paradise of gentle, graceful, courteous attention to beautiful women.

Brilliant Season of 1856.

The season of 1856 at Last island was one of the most charming ever known since the famous watering place had been established. Never did brave men and charming women congregate at this charming rendezvous in greater numbers or in a fuller, finer spirit of happiness and hopeful expectation. The season was at its height. Not only was the hotel proper filled, but the dozen or so of cottages—generally known as the "bachelors' quarters"—were all occupied by as high bred, as gallant and gay a company of gentlemen as the entire south could show.

The morning of September 10, 1865, was one of almost unearthly loveliness. The sea was sometimes as smooth as translucent glass, now as green as an emerald, then sapphire-hued. Its surface was covered with a faintish, misty haze. Its loveliness was supernal. The fishing boats in sight seemed like great white sea birds, trailing their wings as they basked in the morning sunbeams. As the sun rose higher the sea mist vanished. But such a day as it was! The thermometric measurement of September in Louisiana is not greatly different in its altitude of heat from that of New York or Washington. This day, however, there was such a downpour of solar warmth that the island was almost burning. Gentle puffs of wind blew and rippled the sea water and turned it into opalescent green. But the cooling sea breezes, reviving and refreshing all living things, did not come. The day was uncomfortable. Men wandered about listlessly. Politics—it was the great Know-Nothing year, yet talked of in Louisiana political annals—even ceased to charm. In the air there was a stillness as though nature was watching and waiting in silence, baleful, mysterious, ominous.

The sunset that evening affrighted the timid souls. It went down in the west, and the sky red as vermeil, an angry sun, and left the Occident blazing across the waves as though a world was in flames. All that night the Dago fishermen (a curious, superstitious class, half Spanish-Italian and half Creole, taking to the waves like sea-gulls) heard out at sea strange sounds, moans, as though some supernatural being was in awful agony. The morning of the 11th was like that of the previous day. Toward night there came up a terrible thunder storm. The thunder was as unlike that of the northern dash of storm as a firecracker is to the crack and roar of a 6-inch gun.

Lightning Was Terrifying

The dwellers on the mainland and the Teche and Lafourche planters had never before seen such lightning. It flashed from the zenith to the eastern and western horizon in great, broad green, purple and flame-colored bands of electric blaze, a degree in width. And after each awful crash that almost rent the ear-drums there would be a distinctly sulphurous tinge perceptible in the air. Toward the morning of the 12th the thunder and lightning ceased, but the rain continued and the wind grew stronger from the southwest. The sailboats of the frightened fishermen could be seen in the early morning light flying before the wind for secure landings in the safe streams and waters of *chenieres caminada*.

There was to be at the principal hotel that evening the grand ball of the season, for it was to be the last. The band of the French Opera House was there from New Orleans, then unequaled for its music in America. There were no wind instruments except the cornet and flute; the others were stringed. The ballroom was distant from the main hotel perhaps twenty yards, and was reached by a covered way, elevated to the level of both buildings. It was built very near the sea and set upon brick pillars six feet above the surface of the earth. The hotel was constructed in the same fashion, so that the breezes could blow under both edifices and produce better ventilation. Broad, wide piazzas surrounded the ballroom on three sides, upon which doors opened, so that after each dance one might take a turn in promenading on the gallery and enjoy the coolness of the fresh night breeze from the sea.

The piazzas were about 100 feet long by 80 wide. Around the ballroom were rows of chairs, and the usual dressing rooms were in the rear. The musicians occupied a high dais that extended across the end of the ballroom. The buildings were lighted with gas. So much in the way of description.

Toward noon of the 12th the sun shone out for an hour, but it was a dull, orange-hued orb, surrounded by a yellow, misty haze that changed constantly. As night came on the sky was covered with a cloud of deepest blackness. There was a renewal of the vivid sheet lightning, but no thunder. The sea was in such agitation as the oldest present had never before seen. Great, brilliant lights burst from the waves as they were rolled in by the tremendous southwest wind. Deep, phosphorescent fires, incandescent in serpentine forms, were seen rising from the waves like shadowy monsters. And, most terrible of all, there was distinctly audible at intervals in the blackness and gloom an unearthly moan from the depths of the sea.

Panic Among the Women.

The women became seriously frightened and the men realized that nature was in one of her most unusual and marvelous moods. Still, no one anticipated any real danger. There had been great storms before. This was but the beginning of the equinoctial blow. The ballroom was lighted. There was nothing else to do but go to the dance. Women clothed themselves for the evening's ball, aided by the deft-handed maids, but with hearts ill at ease. Other thoughts than those of conquests were filling their souls with dread of what might come. But they would go; perhaps the gay dresses, the brilliant lights, the soft, sweet dance music might drive away the vague fears that oppressed their souls.

At 10 o'clock the dance was at its height. Outside the storm was raging. The intense blackness of darkness was broken by the constant broad flashes of lightning and phosphorescent blaze of the sea. A terrible wind blew, with torrents of slanting rain that was as warm as newly drawn blood. The band was playing one of Gottschalk's sweetest dreamy waltzes (he was a Louisianian, you know), "Creole Eyes," when a girl screamed. Her white satin bootine had been wetted by water coming up through the floor!

Terror then beset all. A rush was made for the hotel, but the covered way was gone. It had been carried off by a tremendous wave of the raging sea! Mothers had left their little children asleep in the other house. How should they get to them? It was utterly impossible unless one had wings to pass over the tossing, boiling flood of maddened sea that rolled between them. Of the horrors that followed no living tongue could ever tell. But about midnight a strange sea moan that became a roar grew nearer and louder until it was like 10,000 thundering Niagaras. It was a tidal wave, 1,000 miles long, ten miles wide and sixty feet high! And as it rolled resistless, hotel, ballroom, all—all was swallowed up in the maw of the pitiless sea. Men, women and little ones were parted never again to meet until that final day, "when the sea shall give up its dead!"

Such a tragedy had never been known before in the nation's history. Nothing was left of the lovely isle but a few broken brick pillars to mark where life and beauty had died such a death. For weeks patrol boats along the mainland shore found nothing but dead bodies. In one case the corpse of a lady in the last putrescent stages was identified by nearly $50,000 worth of diamonds she had worn that fateful night. Think of the ghastliness of it. The only two survivors were a strong, powerful negress, who blindly caught on a door that was floating by and was carried in to the mainland; and the other was a tiny baby girl, not more than 18 months old. She had been placed upon a billiard table, which floated, and there she was found on the Lafourche shore forty-eight hours after the storm. Nearly every household in southern Louisiana was in mourning, for 400 adults were lost.

How helpless we are when Old Nature looses her awful mystic force and turns upon man!

MONSTER-MAKING.

Horrible Transformation in Human Beings by Expert Chinese.

[*From the Morning Oregonian.*]

From time to time the Chinese authorities by official proclamation warn the people of the country against child thieves. In Europe children are often stolen by strolling mountebanks, who, by a disjointing process, make them supple and expert. In China monsters are often made of them.

To transfer a man into a beast would at first seem impossible. It is accomplished, however, by the Chinese, to whom nothing seems to be unknown. The skin is removed in small particles from the entire surface of the body and to the bleeding parts bits of the hide of living animals, bears and dogs are usually applied. The operation requires years for its full accomplishment. After the person has had his skin completely changed and becomes a man-bear or man-dog, he is made mute to complete the illusion and also to deprive him of the means of informing the public he is intended to amuse of his long torture.

A Chinese journal, the Hupao, prints a description of one of these human animals exhibited at the Kiangsi. His entire body was covered with dogskin. He stood erect, although sometimes the feet are so mutilated that the beast is forced to walk on all fours; could utter articulate sounds, rise and sit down—in short, make the gestures of any human being.

A mandarin who heard of this monstrosity had him brought to his palace, where his hairy skin and bestial appearance caused quite as much terror as surprise. Upon being asked if he was a man the creature replied with an affirmative nod. He also signified in the same manner that he could write. A pencil was given to him, but he could not use it, his hands were so deformed. Ashes were then placed on the ground in front of him, when the man-dog, leaning over, traced in them five characters, indicating his name and country.

Investigation showed that he had been stolen, imprisoned for years and subjected to long tortures. His master, who was condemned to death, testified during the trial that barely one in five failed to endure the process of skin changing. He practiced it according to a traditional and doubtless old formula.

The Chinese have another still more horrible method of monster-making. They know how to graft a child on an adult in imitation of natural teratology. The operation is on the same principle as that of skin grafting. The circulatory systems are brought into close contact by means of deep wounds. According to a note of Consul Cinatti the Chinese are skillful in performing such experiments on animals. They delight in giving chickens the feet of ducks and in putting cocks' combs on the heads of ducks.

Darkness alone, it seems, is sufficient to make a curious specimen of a child, especially if a certain kind of food is given to it and its vocal cords are made useless. A living Buddha was made in this way and exhibited by the bonzes to their congregations. This child, after years passed in absolute darkness, had become as white as wax. He had been obliged to remain motionless in the posture of Buddha until his muscles had become rigid. No one had ever spoken to him, and he had grown in his cellar as a fungus would have done. Brought out to the light, this mute, blinking living statue was eagerly worshiped by the credulous.

At Shanghai, shortly after the opening of the port, there was on exhibition a monster whose enormous head, with its long hair and mustache was that of a person of thirty, while the body was as small as that of a child of two. This marvelous result had been obtained by placing the victim, when a child, in a jar from which the head alone protruded. This grew abnormally large, while the body remained stationary in its narrow prison house.

CONTROVERSY BETWEEN A NOVELIST AND DRAMATIST.

Mrs. W. K. Clifford, the English novelist, and Sydney Grundy, the dramatist, are the principals in a remarkable controversy which is attracting wide attention in London. Mrs. Clifford has written a play, a powerful one, somewhat after the manner of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," with Ibsenite touches, which was published in the Anglo-Saxon Review in March of this year. Its main idea, however, was already contained in a short story by Mrs. Clifford, published in Temple Bar fifteen years ago. When Mr. Grundy's new play, "A Debt of Honor," was produced in London a few weeks ago, Mrs. Clifford wrote at once to the papers, calling attention to the fact that there were many points of resemblance in motive, situation and treatment between the two pieces, adding: "Mr. Grundy's piece is virtually—though of course quite accidentally—an adaptation of my play to what a careful manager might possibly think the scruples of the public and the modern stage require. The coincidence even extends to a close verbal similarity in some of the lines of the dialogue."

Mr. Grundy has replied to this that he was quite ignorant of the fact that Mrs. Clifford had written this play and that he had never seen the story on which it is based in Temple Bar, or the printed drama itself in the Anglo-Saxon Review. He adds: "My play was written and in Mr. Alexander's possession two years before I heard of the existence of Mrs. Clifford's play and story. My contract with Mr. Alexander, made after the acceptance of the manuscript, bears date of July 2, 1898." What is still more remarkable is that Mrs. Clifford submitted her play to Mr. Alexander at a much earlier date, but the manager-actor evidently had forgotten all about it when he read Mr. Grundy's drama; he certainly did not mention the similarity. But, then, he probably sees too many plays to remember the ones he refuses. The discussion has been carried on with exemplary courtesy, Mrs. Clifford making it plain that she does not suspect Mr. Grundy of plagiarism. It is likely that her play, too, will be produced ere long, when the verdict of the public may be expected. The differences between the two are said to be as striking as the similarities.

Mrs. Corinne Churchill does not need the reflected glory given by her stepson's literary reputation as the author of "Richard Carvel" to make her famous. She is a woman of versatile talents and her accomplishments include music, both vocal and instrumental, and that other gentle art so dear to the dilettante—painting. Mrs. Churchill is a native of New York. Her husband, Edward Spaulding Churchill, belongs to the titled English branch of that name. Her work as an artist includes both animal and marine painting and examples of each class of her work have brought high prices. Mrs. Churchill excels as a musician in the mastery of the organ and harp, and as a composer and song writer. Her "Richard Carvel" march is becoming widely known. Her latest effort is the "Sunshine Waltz," dedicated to Mrs. Cynthia Westover Alden, president of the International Sunshine society. An opera entitled "Ourrita," produced in Brussels some years ago, attracted much attention and general commendation. Mrs. Churchill is now at work on another opera, to be produced in New York this winter. She is often the leading figure at entertainments given for charity and is lavish with her talents for the benefit of others.

An Investment Not an Expense.

[*From the Philadelphia Record.*]

A large and successful advertiser says that when he first went into business he regarded newspaper advertising as an expense which was important, but not essential to success; but a little experience taught him to view regular and systematic advertising in the most widely circulated newspapers as an investment or as a necessary part of the capital put into his establishment. "Like any other safe investment," he says, "the newspaper 'ad' brings in profits, and without it an enterprise falls short of its possibilities."